

Cal carried three pails to the large brown barn and tried to find his way to the latched door. It was dark still and the sun had not yet cast a rosy glow on the Circle H Farm owned by Cal's father, Tim Howard. Cal was in charge of milking the cows before breakfast and he took his job seriously, rising at four in the morning and finishing his work before six o'clock, when his mother served a hearty breakfast.

Cal took a pail of fresh milk to his mother. Then he helped her set the table and butter the toast. She had made eggs and bacon, fresh muffins, and fruit, a large breakfast. The farm had been losing money ever since the drought had started, three years ago. Since then, the Circle H Farm had lost three crops of wheat, five acres of soybeans, and several head of cattle to the heat and lack of rain.

"Good morning, son. Thanks for milking the cows so quickly because I will need your help on the south fence. It seems that some rodent wants to get in or some cow wants to get out!" said Dad. "I will be glad to help you just as soon as I put some hay out for the cows and horses. By the way, we are running very low on our supply," said Cal. His father shook his head and told Cal that if it did not rain soon, they would have to sell most of their livestock because they could not afford to buy any more hay.

Cal finished the meal without saying anything because they all knew how hard it would be to sell their cattle that they had raised from calves. Cal thought it would be almost like selling members of the family.

That afternoon as Cal and his father rode their horses to the south fence to mend it with wire, Cal noticed some dark clouds moving slowly over the flat southern plains. "Don't get your hopes up because I don't think they're predicting any rain," said his dad. "It can't hurt to be hopeful," replied Cal, and they worked on the fence.

Several minutes later, Cal felt cool drops on his forehead and arms. He peered up into the clouds as a cloudburst dropped large raindrops on the parched land. Cal and his father rode quickly home and watched the rain fall for two days. The Circle H Farm was going to survive the drought after all, and Cal looked up and thanked the clouds that had watered the earth.

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